

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

May 5, 2021
9:02 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Roger Holland, Chair
Senator Gary Stevens, Vice Chair
Senator Shelley Hughes
Senator Tom Begich

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Peter Micciche

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: TEACHER RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT ACTION PLAN

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

BARBARA ADAMS, Ph.D., Consultant
Adams Analytic Solutions
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Participated in the presentation on Teacher Retention and Recruitment (TRR) Working Group Action Plan.

CATHE' RHODES, Member
Teacher Retention and Recruitment (TRR) Working Group
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Participated in the presentation on the Teacher Retention and Recruitment (TRR) Working Group Action Plan.

AMY GALLAWAY, Member
Teacher Retention and Recruitment (TRR) Working Group
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Participated in the presentation on the Teacher Retention and Recruitment (TRR) Working Group Action Plan.

SALLY STOCKHAUSEN, Member

Teacher Retention and Recruitment (TRR) Working Group
Ketchikan, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Participated in the presentation on the Teacher Retention and Recruitment (TRR) Working Group Action Plan.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[9:02:47 AM](#)

CHAIR ROGER HOLLAND called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Stevens, Hughes, and Chair Holland. Senator Begich arrived shortly thereafter.

Teacher Retention and Recruitment Action Plan

[9:03:20 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND announced the business before the committee would be a presentation on the Teacher Retention and Recruitment Action Plan that was released on April 20, 2021.

[9:04:07 AM](#)

BARBARA ADAMS, Ph.D., Consultant, Adams Analytic Solutions, Fairbanks, Alaska, said she is a consultant for the Governor's Teacher Retention and Recruitment (TRR) Working Group. She asked TRR Working Group members to introduce themselves.

CATHE' RHODES, Member, Teacher Retention and Recruitment (TRR) Working Group, Palmer, Alaska, said she is a retired teacher. She stated she worked for two years in Kaktovik, 12 years on the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project and currently works as an advisory teacher for the Wasilla Raven Homeschool program.

[9:04:43 AM](#)

AMY GALLAWAY, Member, Teacher Retention and Recruitment (TRR) Working Group, Fairbanks, Alaska, stated that she teaches civics and history in Fairbanks and was recognized as the 2020 Alaska Teacher of the Year.

[9:05:56 AM](#)

SALLY STOCKHAUSEN, Member, Teacher Retention and Recruitment (TRR) Working Group, Ketchikan, Alaska, stated that she serves

as a member of the Alaska State Board of Education and has worked as a teacher for almost 20 years.

9:07:19 AM

DR. ADAMS reviewed the background of the working group on slide 2, which read:

- Working Group established by Governor and Commissioner of Education
- Members include 17 practitioners and stakeholders from around the state: teachers (6), administrators (3), students (2), school board members (2), leadership mentors (2), UA board of regent (1), and Commissioner (1)
- Advisors (6) of the stakeholder groups: AASB, ACSA, CEE, NEA-AK, SERRC, and UA COE
- Observers from Legislature (4), DEED (4)
- Monthly meetings May 2020 - March 2021

MS. ADAMS noted that in 2020 Governor Dunleavy's State of the State address instructed the Commissioner of Education & Early Development (DEED) to assemble a working group to review the root causes of recruitment and retention issues, including working conditions and benefits, in order to attract and retain great teachers. Thus, the Teacher Retention and Recruitment Working Group (TRR Working Group) was created. She reviewed the TRR Working Group's membership. She stated that the TRR Working Group's work was completed in March 2021. She highlighted that the summary notes are posted to DEED's website at: <https://education.alaska.gov/trr>.

9:10:25 AM

MS. STOCKHAUSEN paraphrased slide 3, Working Group Reporting, which read:

Purpose

The purpose of this working group is to review the root causes of Alaska's teacher retention and recruitment issues and propose solutions to better attract and retain great teachers. Knowing the cornerstone of a great educational program starts with a great teacher, this working group will seek to problem solve this component of the system to ensure

Alaska can provide an excellent education for every student every day. The Commissioner of Education, with the help of this working group, will develop a plan that proposes practical, professional, and policy recommendations for the Governor through research-based methods as well as represented stakeholder groups.

[9:11:16 AM](#)

MS. GALLAWAY reviewed slide 4, Data Collection, which read:

- TRR Survey
 - Launched 10/26/2020
 - Closed 1/31/2021
 - All educators holding a current certificated license
 - Personal link, 20 mins
 - Emailed comments were self-initiated by educators
- Leaver Interviews
 - Identified via list from DEED and responses to survey
 - Personal email for 1-1 interview, 10 mins
 - Semi-structured interview protocol
- Recruitment Focus Groups
 - Urban and Rural separately
 - Additional subgroup outreach
 - Semi-structured focus group protocol

MS. GALLAWAY said the group did its own research. The group spent substantial time creating, revising and testing a Teacher Recruitment and Retention Survey. The survey was conducted from October 2020 through the end of January 2021. A link to the survey was sent to all currently licensed educators, by email. Some participants emailed additional comments to Dr. Adams, which were incorporated into the research summary. Dr. Adams conducted "leaver" interviews consisting of four questions. She stated that the TRR Working Group created recruitment focus groups.

[9:14:10 AM](#)

DR. ADAMS reviewed slide 5, Survey Details. She explained that the TRR Working Group recognized that significant research was performed over the past 40 years in the state. The TRR Working Group was familiar with the issues but sought to figure out how to address them and set priorities.

9:15:31 AM

DR. ADAMS reviewed slide 6, TRR Survey Sample Question. She explained that the survey used a scaling technique, which asked people to select the most important and least important items. The research identified 40 issues important to educators. Individuals saw a random sample of four items on each of 15 sample questions related to personal motivation.

9:16:54 AM

DR. ADAMS reviewed slide 7, TRR Survey Sample Question, which showed one of 15 sample questions related to potential solutions for improving teacher retention and recruitment in Alaska. The question asked participants to select the most influential or least influential of the four items listed. She explained that there were 34 potential solutions.

9:18:02 AM

DR. ADAMS presented slide 8, Survey Sample Size, which consisted of a diagram of participants. The TRR Working Group wanted to determine the reasons teachers stayed in Alaska. She stated that 15,700 currently certificated Alaska teachers from 54 school districts responded to the survey. The respondents were broken out into 7,750 who lived within the school districts and 7,950 who lived out of the school districts. Of the 15,700 respondents, 40 percent answered the demographic questions by identifying themselves as teachers within a district. The group's sample was considered representative of Alaska's current educators. She highlighted that the response rate was considered a strong response rate for this type of survey.

9:20:21 AM

SENATOR BEGICH asked whether the 7,950 figure reflected educators who are not teaching currently but do hold teacher certificates.

DR. ADAMS answered that it is the number of teachers with active certificates as of October 2020. It includes retired teachers, homeschool teachers, and lifetime certificate holders. She noted that some no longer reside in Alaska.

9:21:09 AM

SENATOR BEGICH offered his view that the response was robust. He asked whether the survey included a question about what it would take to get these teachers to return to their profession.

9:21:43 AM

DR. ADAM answered no.

9:21:50 AM

SENATOR BEGICH commented on the importance of recruiting teachers and offered his view that the state should consider inducements to attract some of the 7,950 certificated respondents back into teaching.

DR. ADAMS said it was an excellent point.

9:22:55 AM

DR. ADAMS reviewed slide 9, Composition of Survey Respondents, which consisted of three pie charts and a bar graph analysis. She identified that of the 3,604 respondents who completed the survey, about 75 percent were current educators, 9.7 percent were current administrators, 7.4 percent were retired educators, and 7.9 percent were not in the current K-12 system but were homeschooling parents, not working or other. She directed attention to the various roles of the respondents, noting that 47.5 percent of the respondents were classroom teachers. She said adding in the special education teachers and specialists [brought the percentage up to 67.1 percent] and noted that the survey covered a wide range of educators in the state.

9:24:16 AM

DR. ADAMS reviewed slide 10, Composition of Survey Respondents, which was related to demographics, including the retirement tier, gender, and location. She stated that the responses were comparable with teacher demographics in Alaska.

9:26:01 AM

DR. ADAMS reviewed slide 11, Composition of Survey Respondents, which consisted of two histogram bar graphs showing the respondents' total years of teaching experience and the years of teaching experience in Alaska. She pointed out that slide 11 showed an even distribution of early, mid, and late career teachers.

9:26:32 AM

SENATOR BEGICH pointed out that slide 11 also indicated that teachers come to Alaska with experience.

DR. ADAMS responded that she thought that was correct.

SENATOR BEGICH said this seems to imply that Alaska is an attractive environment that brings teachers to the state.

[9:27:19 AM](#)

DR. ADAMS reviewed slide 12, Alaska Status. She explained that this slide highlights 15 reasons the respondents had an affinity to Alaska. For example, it listed items including that the respondent was born and raised in Alaska, graduated from high school in Alaska, or moved to Alaska with the military.

[9:28:50 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH disclosed that his wife was a participant in this survey but this was his first look at results.

[9:29:22 AM](#)

DR. ADAMS turned to slide 13, Retention Status. She explained that respondents could choose any of the 16 categories listed that applied to them. The analysis showed the percentage of educators who chose each item, such as who expected to stay at the same school, move to another district or retire as reasons to stay in Alaska during the upcoming school year.

[9:30:27 AM](#)

DR. ADAMS reviewed slide 14, Correlations. She explained that experience and experience in Alaska were well correlated. This means that retirement tier can be used for subgroup analysis in place of the continuous variables of experience and/or experience in Alaska, she said.

[9:30:59 AM](#)

DR. ADAMS reviewed slide 15, Results to Consider, which read:

- Survey Part 1: Personal Importance
- Survey Part 2: Solution Influence
- Survey Results by Subgroups
- Coding of Email Comments, Interviews, Focus Groups
- Alignment of Results

She emphasized that the survey analysis will show that their recommendations were grounded in research.

[9:32:32 AM](#)

DR. ADAMS reviewed the TRS Survey-Probability Score for Personal Importance shown on slide 17. She explained the bar graph, such that the first choice was 17 times more preferable than the bottom choice. She cautioned members that the items that were ranked on the bottom did not mean that these reasons were not important since 40 years of research showed that things like,

"availability of professional mentoring" or "access to professional development by other teachers" were important. It meant that educators prioritized their top choices as those that were currently more important to them.

[9:33:57 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked how the 17 to 1 ratio compares to the norm.

DR. ADAMS responded that first, this type of survey has never been done in the state and was rarely used in education. She offered her belief that the TRR Work Group was on the forefront by using this type of survey in order to better understand issues of personal importance. Second, she pointed out that there is not any statistical value assigned to the preference scores. Instead, statisticians typically consider statistical significance, which can be calculated. Statisticians also consider practical significance. This type of work stems from marketing. For example, in marketing, if a statistician tells the client that the consumer is 17 times more likely to buy a product, that fact presents a pretty significant number. If a survey participant was 15 times more likely to select an item, it feels powerful, she said.

[9:36:40 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH stated he reviewed the items rated above 10, such as quality support from district administration, quality support from principals(s), having sufficient resources available and manageable workload. However, he said he was taken aback that professional mentoring was ranked second to the bottom and professional development was ranked at 2.1 because the committee and department focused on providing these to teachers. This survey shows different preferences.

CHAIR HOLLAND pointed out that the ranking doesn't show whether the item was absent or present in the current school system, just whether educators consider the items important.

SENATOR BEGICH remarked that the results were different than expected.

SENATOR HUGHES pointed out that other than items related to salary and retirement, the participants ranked relationships and positive school culture very high.

[9:38:54 AM](#)

DR. ADAMS reiterated that prior research shows that the items that ranked low on the graph were important. She said the TRR

working group wondered if the lower ranked items on the graph meant these items were already being done well, if the respondent did not understand the item, or if the low ranking meant that these issues did not matter.

9:40:05 AM

DR. ADAMS turned to slide 18, Personal Importance Item by Role, which consisted of a table that was broken down by the top 15 items listed on slide 17. They were further broken down by category, including educator, administrator, other, retired, and unclassified. She stated that this table provides a sense of how different groups rated the items. She explained that the 618 unclassified participants were the ones who did not provide any demographic information. She stated that the 2,704 educators tended to align with the responses as a whole group. She highlighted that the administrators ranked retirement benefits first, adequate compensation for assigned duties second, and positive workplace conditions third. The retirees ranked positive workplace conditions first and personal connections with students second, which was in line with Senator Hughes' remark that the group values relationships.

9:41:23 AM

SENATOR BEGICH surmised that administrators rated retirement as first because these respondents were often teachers who were working towards the end of their careers. He remarked that this survey provides the committee with great data.

9:42:07 AM

DR. ADAMS turned to a graph on slide 19, TRR Personal Importance-Top 1-7 Preference Scores by Role. She said the graph helps show the weighting. She explained that it is the same data for the top ranked choices as is shown on slides 17 and 18 but it consists of symbols for current educators, administrators, others, and retirees.

9:43:04 AM

CHAIR HOLLAND pointed out that having a manageable workload ranked slightly lower for administrators than for current educators.

9:43:32 AM

DR. ADAMS presented a table on slide 21 that showed Personal Importance - Top 1-8 Average Preference Scores by Location (school). She said the urban and rural road system participants ranked salaries first but the rural and rural hub rated positive

workplace conditions first and personal connections with students second.

SENATOR BEGICH remarked that slide 21 underscored that the urban members rank retirement second but rural teachers rank retirement fifth and sixth. However, he cautioned against reviewing the slide results exclusively since there were 15 categories. He noted that the off-road rural locations appeared to favor working conditions over road and urban educators.

DR. ADAMS agreed. She said positive workplace conditions ranked high for all four groups.

[9:47:47 AM](#)

DR. ADAMS presented the table on slide 22, Personal Importance Items by TRS Tier. She explained that rankings were very different depending on the retirement tier.

[9:48:13 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH remarked that all three tiers ranked the same top five items with one exception, which was that tier 1 ranked positive school culture as fourth.

DR. ADAMS stated her agreement. She indicated that the retirement benefits were ranked differently by location on slide 23, even though retirement was ranked in the top five for all tiers. She reminded members that the survey asked 15 questions, which were all ranked.

[9:50:12 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND stated he previously worked at the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOTPF) for ten years, which had four retirement tiers. He acknowledged that TRS consists of only three tiers.

DR. ADAMS agreed.

CHAIR HOLLAND asked if TRS Tier III was similar to PERS Tier IV.

[9:51:04 AM](#)

DR. ADAMS said she did not know the exact distinction but they will be much more similar. She stated that PERS Tier III and Tier IV were similar to TRS III.

SENATOR BEGICH clarified that TRS Tier III was a defined contribution (DC) plan and Tiers I and II were defined benefits (DB) plans.

[9:51:44 AM](#)

DR. ADAMS added that TRS Tier III went into effect in July 2007 and was based on experience and age.

[9:52:15 AM](#)

DR. ADAMS reviewed slide 24, TRR Survey - Probability Score for Solution Influence Feb. 6, 2021. She explained that this portion of the survey represented the second set of questions consisting of 34 options. The prompt asked participants to consider which of four choices would be most influential and least influential for teacher retention in Alaska. She reported that "competitive salary commensurate with cost of living" ranked 21.1 times more than "increased Alaska culture and history requirements for (re) certification" which scored 1.0. In fact, the top-ranked reasons educators selected for teachers to stay in Alaska related to salary and benefits, including incentives. In fact, the 10th item on the rankings "creating or strengthening webs of support" ranked at 9.8 was the first item that aligned with personal influences. She suggested that many items that fell towards the bottom might be due to the theoretical nature or else respondents did not understand exactly what the specific item meant. Statistically, these types of indicators did not function as well. For example, about 500 people did not answer the second section of the survey. However, she believed that this section still provided enough information to connect the responses to the first section of the survey.

[9:54:36 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND asked if the survey stressed that the results would be kept confidential. He recalled that people responded to the survey by email.

DR. ADAMS answered yes. However, she agreed that not everyone felt comfortable that the information would be held confidential.

CHAIR HOLLAND surmised that the lower response rate for the second part of the survey might be due to the length of the survey.

[9:55:29 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked whether there was any reason why the "national board certification bonus" scored so low since the item also relates to salary.

DR. ADAMS responded that she was unsure if teachers thought the bonus was unattainable or if it would take too much effort to qualify, particularly since educators experienced a stressful year due to the pandemic.

CHAIR HOLLAND asked whether it might be because some teachers were already qualified to receive the bonus so they did not think it was a big concern for teacher retention.

DR. ADAMS responded that she thought only a small percentage of teachers were qualified to receive the bonus.

MS. GALLAWAY related her understanding from conversations with teachers, that the national board certification bonus process was arduous and long so teachers did not find the salary bump big enough to warrant going through the process.

[9:57:55 AM](#)

DR. ADAMS reviewed slide 26, TRR Solution Influence - Top 1-10 Preference Scores by Role and the Solution Influence Items on slide 27. She said she reported the results in the same way as they were reported in the first part of the survey.

[9:58:49 AM](#)

DR. ADAMS turned to slide 28, TRR Solution Influence - Top 1-6 Average Preference Scores by Location (school) and to slide 29, Solution Influence Items.

She stated that the results in this section showed more commonality than the ones for the first section of the survey. She pointed out that there were five different options specific to retirement. She explained that people had differing views about what changes to make with respect to retirement. For example, respondents were not in agreement as to whether to return to DB or to contribute to Social Security.

[10:00:19 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH pointed out that the responses related to whether to return to a DB system was consistently ranked third by "rural hub and rural, road system" and rural Alaska ranked it fourth. He said the responses made sense since DC offers ready access to cash. He related that the option "state moves to a hybrid retirement with personal and state investments" ranked in the top 10.

[10:01:41 AM](#)

DR. ADAMS agreed that retirement plans were important but pointed out that one solution for TRS retirement plans did not outperform all of the other solutions. For example, whether to return to DB was ranked third but the other options were not ranked at the bottom. For example, contributing to social security was ranked 7th, hybrid retirement plan was ranked 8th and portability was ranked 9th. She suggested that the rankings indicated something must change but respondents did not give clear guidance on what direction to take.

[10:03:04 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH disagreed. He interpreted that going back to the DB or a hybrid system would be the same since teachers would still retain a choice. Further, the state could decide to institute a policy to opt out of the Supplemental Benefits System (SBS) and move to Social Security. In addition, the legislature could easily introduce a bill for a hybrid plan that would honor the choices of opting for portability and Social Security. He suggested that going back to a choice system would give teachers a smorgasbord of options. Further, a legislative audit in January 2021 showed that the state could go to a hybrid system without incurring additional costs. He offered his belief that this study provides guidance to the retirement issue because it shows that educators want choices. He suggested that the state should provide low-cost solutions to retain teachers.

DR. ADAMS thanked Senator Begich for his perspective.

[10:05:04 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND asked whether the survey consisted of four-item questions rather than listing all 15 options and asking respondents to prioritize them.

DR. ADAMS replied that it consists of a series of four-item questions.

[10:05:41 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH related his understanding that everyone was exposed to all 15 options but the options were posed in different comparisons.

DR. ADAMS agreed.

[10:06:12 AM](#)

DR. ADAMS directed attention to a graph on slide 30, TRR Solution Influence - Top 1-5 Preference Scores by Retirement Tier. She stated that the top five items were closely ranked but

respondents in various tiers did not respond consistently to the remaining questions.

10:08:28 AM

DR. ADAMS turned to slide 31, Qualitative Analysis Ordered Codes. She pointed out that besides taking surveys, the group sent emails, held a focus group with recruiters and reviewed the results of interviews with leavers and the focus group with recruiters. She said each response from survey participants was coded with demographic codes. She reported that the top three qualitative themes were benefits, leadership and working conditions. She stated that the comments on leadership indicated that teachers decided whether to stay or leave based on the principal. She emphasized that these conditions related to the school culture and collegiality.

10:10:59 AM

CHAIR HOLLAND asked if the term "leavers" meant teachers who left the workforce.

DR. ADAMS responded that leavers referred to the teachers who left teaching in Alaska. These former teachers could still reside in Alaska or may have left the state.

10:11:34 AM

DR. ADAMS reviewed slide 32, Alignment, which related to part 1 of the survey. She explained that the results fell into three general summaries. The first was financial, including salary, retirement benefits and good healthcare benefits. She directed attention to the third column which listed solution items. She explained that the codes, such as "[benefits][conditions]" shown at the bottom was a means to align items and help determine the next direction to take.

DR. ADAMS related that slide 33 listed working conditions and support and professionalism. She highlighted that the personal importance items included items such as positive workplace conditions, personal connections with students and positive school culture.

10:13:15 AM

SENATOR BEGICH recalled that Dr. Adams previously conducted another TRR study with former Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) Commissioner Covey. He asked if the results of that survey were similar to this one or if they were dramatically different.

DR. ADAMS responded that there was a lot of alignment between this study and the Educator Quality and Quantity (EQQ) Study conducted by Mr. Covey. She recalled that the EQQ Study proposed a systematic approach to teacher quality and retention grounded in measurable outcomes with cultural relevance. It was broken down into how to develop and retain and how to recruit and train. She said there was substantial alignment between the two studies.

[10:14:29 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH recalled that the EQQ was initiated in 2015 or 2016. It provided preliminary work for SB 42, related to virtual and early education and reading; and SB 8, related to pre-K and Elementary Education programs. These two bills also contained provisions for the Teacher Retention Task Force.

[10:15:36 AM](#)

DR. ADAMS moved to slide 35, Recommendations, TRR Action Plan, which showed six essential areas that were identified and organized by the research results. She deferred to Ms. Gallaway to present the first area.

[10:16:28 AM](#)

MS. GALLAWAY presented Essential Area 1, Strengthening Working Conditions on slide 36, which read:

1. Develop a committee to create an Educator Induction Program framework to share with districts.
2. Identify methods to measure working conditions that support making data-driven improvements and share those options with districts.
3. Develop a variety of example strategies for districts to support additional financial opportunities.

MS. GALLAWAY explained that the TRR Working Group recognized that salary was ranked first. This essential area relates to retention. Projects, such as the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project and the Alaska School Leadership Academy as well as other projects would become part of a multi-year Educator Induction Program that could be used and tailored by each district to meet its own needs. She emphasized the importance of having individuality and local control in the school districts. She suggested that this framework could address how to create favorable working conditions for teachers to encourage educators to stay in Alaska.

10:19:12 AM

MS. GALLAWAY said the second recommendation was to make data-driven improvements, such as compiling vendor lists of programs or organizations to measure working conditions. She offered her belief that the department should furnish these funds for districts.

MS. GALLAWAY highlighted that the third item was to develop strategies to support financial opportunities, such as restructuring salary schedules and repealing the statute that limits experience credit for out of state teachers to allow districts more freedom to determine compensation. She recalled that Representative Story suggested creating a legislative Education Funding Committee to address flat funding and forward funding in order to figure out how to keep up with national salaries.

10:21:10 AM

MS. STOCKHAUSEN paraphrased slide 37, Essential Area 2, Developing Leadership, which read:

1. Create an Organizational Health System for superintendents to assess the health of their district and to then offer supporting strategies to address the identified areas of need.
2. Increase professional support for mentoring new administrators.
3. Develop and adopt processes for teachers to contribute to principal evaluation to strengthen leadership.

10:23:47 AM

MS. GALLAWAY reviewed Essential Area 3, Restructuring Retirement Options on slide 38.

1. Establish a Retirement Task Force to identify multiple methods to restructure TRS Tier III, including hybrid plans to determine possible options for the state.
2. Develop and offer financial literacy education through extended benefits training.

MS. GALLAWAY recalled that Commissioner Johnson repeatedly stated that teacher retention and recruitment must be a consistent, ongoing and cyclical process. She agreed that the process was constantly evolving. Thus, part of the solution was

to create other committees or task forces consisting of teachers, educators, and administrators across the state. She stated that the TRR Work Group would like the Retirement Task Force to submit its recommendations to the legislature by January 2022.

MS. GALLAWAY stated the TRR Working Group wanted to develop methods to incentivize teachers to stay beyond five years. She pointed out that she observed a number of teachers who left Alaska after five years to move to a state that had a DB program.

[10:26:37 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked whether the intent of the Retirement Task Force was to propose solutions in January 2022 but it would continue to meet annually to retool teacher retirement goals.

[10:27:13 AM](#)

MS. GALLAWAY answered yes. She explained that the TRR Working Group and DEED Commissioner Johnson believe the work must be ongoing.

SENATOR BEGICH responded that he appreciated the clarification since it was not clear in the document.

[10:27:51 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES suggested that the TRR Work Group recommendations should be submitted by December 31, 2021, in order for the legislature to act on any policy recommendations.

CHAIR HOLLAND stated that if the recommendations were not submitted by the end of the year, it could delay any action on the TRR Work Group recommendations until the 33rd legislative session [in 2022 - 2023].

[10:28:51 AM](#)

MS. GALLAWAY continued to discuss slide 38, Essential Area 3. She highlighted the second recommendation, which was the need for financial literacy education for teachers through extended benefits training. She stated that the goal is to provide better education for Tier III educators to better understand how to leverage their retirement benefits. She emphasized the importance of informing young teachers about tax options, such as investing outside of the DC retirement plan.

[10:29:57 AM](#)

MS. RHODES reviewed slide 39, Essential Area 4, Enhancing Recruitment Efforts and Opportunities, which read:

1. Conduct an Independent Recruitment Audit to review the current teacher recruitment practices in Alaska.
2. Develop a Statewide Recruitment Task Force to propose specific solutions and funding.
3. Restructure Alaska Teacher Placement (ATP) services concurrently with the audit to maximize potential statewide recruitment as soon as possible.
4. Support expansion of the grow-your-own models already in place.
5. Consider models of Alternative Certification Pathways and determine which ones to adopt.

MS. RHODES stated that some concepts overlapped since there is not any clear separation between the recommendations. She said she helped conduct small focus groups for the big five districts in Anchorage, Mat-Su, Kenai, Fairbanks and Juneau. In addition, she helped conduct small focus groups for rural recruiters in rural school districts including the Lower Yukon and Yukon-Kuskokwim (Y-K), St. Mary's and Lake and Peninsula Borough School.

MS. RHODES highlighted the recommendations on slide 39 included conducting an Independent Recruitment Audit and determining whether the audit should be within the University of Alaska (UA), the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) or be conducted by an independent contract. She added that UA has a waiting list for nurses so it should be possible to develop a list of educators.

10:32:43 AM

MS. RHODES described the recruitment process that the Lake and Peninsula School District (LPSD) system uses. The district brings in teachers in the spring, provides them with a stipend and allows them to teach in the schools. This exposure allows teachers to better understand whether teaching in rural Alaska would be a "good fit" for them so they could assess if they could thrive in Alaska. She explained that this process is cost effective for rural districts since hiring new teachers to replace those who left mid-contract was costly. Another suggestion made was to develop an advertising campaign, including videos to showcase Alaska to potential Lower 48 teachers. This could attract teachers who seek a sense of

adventure or want exposure to Native Alaskan culture to come to Alaska.

10:34:35 AM

MS. RHODES reviewed the 4th recommendation on slide 39, Essential Area 4. She stated that the Lower Kuskokwim School District (LKSD) uses a program that encourages educators within the district, such as those working as paraprofessionals, to become teachers. Further, she stated that the goal of UA's Educators Rising Alaska program was to inspire middle school or high school students statewide to become future educators. These types of grow-your-own models could be expanded.

MS. RHODES emphasized the importance of finding alternative ways to certify teachers. For example, it makes sense to find ways for paraprofessionals to become certified teachers since these educators already have established relationships with students and the community. Incorporating these established paraprofessionals as teachers could help schools achieve success. She highlighted that many people with college degrees move to Alaska but lack teaching degrees. Thus, it could be important to keep the UA Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program in place. A prior UA program allowed people with Bachelor of Art degrees to enroll in a two-year program. This program allowed them to teach and achieve teacher certification while taking courses.

10:36:50 AM

SENATOR HUGHES asked what recommendations the TRR Working Group developed to reach out to the nearly 8,000 Alaskans who hold teaching certificates but are not currently teaching.

10:37:16 AM

MS. RHODES acknowledged that the TRR Working Group recognized that many retired teachers live in Alaska. She suggested it was worth considering removing restrictions that prevent districts from giving teachers credit for experience that Ms. Gallaway mentioned earlier.

10:37:50 AM

SENATOR STEVENS asked whether UA's Educators Rising program was worth pursuing.

MS. RHODES answered that the program was a relatively new one but the feedback has been encouraging. She suggested that it would take time to assess the program's effectiveness.

CHAIR HOLLAND asked the presenters to cover Essential Areas 5 and 6.

10:38:51 AM

MS. STOCKHAUSEN reviewed slide 40, Essential Area 5, Creating paraprofessional pathways, which read:

1. Create a tiered pathway or career ladder for paraprofessionals.
2. Identify and share additional resources that would assist districts and the University of Alaska in the development of Alaska alternative programs for paraprofessionals.

She elaborated that she is passionate about creating the paraprofessional pathways recommended on slide 40. She offered her belief that paraprofessionals represent a great resource for the state. In fact, she stated that she would not have survived as a new special education teacher without them. Since then, she has witnessed the positive impact of paraprofessionals in districts, especially with teacher turnover. Many paraprofessionals work two jobs so they do not have the time or financial resources to get certified. She explained that a number of states currently provide tiered pathways and career ladders for paraprofessionals which could provide models for Alaska, since some of the programs Ms. Rhodes mentioned were not consistently offered throughout the state. She suggested that communities could share additional resources to assist districts and the university in developing alternative programs for educators, such as ones for paraprofessionals. Since paraprofessionals already live in Alaska, tapping into them as potential teachers could provide a way to address teacher recruitment issues.

10:41:28 AM

SENATOR STEVENS agreed that the state should pursue pathways and programs for paraprofessionals. He said every village in his district has a paraprofessional who should be a teacher. He acknowledged that paraprofessionals represent a treasure trove for the state.

10:41:59 AM

DR. ADAMS presented Essential Area 6, Streamlining Certification and Recertification on slide 41, which read:

1. Modernize process by creating an online certification system that is more automated and less paper.
2. Offer reciprocity among states with no conditions.
3. Allow alternative methods to satisfy the Alaska studies and multicultural coursework.

10:43:01 AM

DR. ADAMS, in closing, said the recommendations presented today, as well as the implementation tables on the final slides provide an aggressive plan. The Implementation Tables on slides 42 through 44 include recommendations and propose who should lead the effort, the timeframe and the proposed outcomes. She characterized it as relating to alignment and partnerships by enhancing current programs. It is also about rethinking the educational system by making it more systemic. She explained that the TRR Working group recommendations provide flexibility at the local level, where it is considered essential. She acknowledged that positive things were happening in Alaska, including leadership development through the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA). Further, the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) conducted a School Climate & Connectedness Survey in 2020 that can measure working conditions. She emphasized that these things need to be aligned to help the whole system move forward rather than to rely on individuals to figure things out.

10:44:29 AM

SENATOR HUGHES recalled that Alaska Pacific University had a means of providing credit for life experiences. She was unsure if UA explored this but she thought it was worth exploring as a means to assist paraprofessionals gain credit for work experience.

10:45:08 AM

CHAIR HOLLAND thanked the presenters for their time and passion.

10:45:30 AM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Holland adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting at 10:45 a.m.